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at once hastened to offer his services to the Company, with a plan for restoring peace ; but his plan and his offer of services were again declined. Still, he had the resource left of which he had already made such frequent use, and by publishing the *Generall Historie* he made a direct appeal to the public more ambitious than any he had yet attempted. In this work he embodied everything that could tend to the increase of his own reputation, and drew material from every source which could illustrate the history of English colonization. Pocahontas was made to appear in it as a kind of stage deity on every possible occasion, and his own share in the affairs of the Colony is magnified at the expense of all his companions. None of those whose reputations he treated with so much harshness appeared to vindicate their own characters, far less to assert the facts in regard to Pocahontas. The effort indeed failed of its object, for he remained unemployed and without mark of distinction, and died quietly in his bed, in London, in June, 1631 ; but in the absence of criticism, due perhaps to the political excitement of the times, his book survived to become the standard authority on Virginian history. The readiness with which it was received is scarcely so remarkable as the credulity which has left it unquestioned almost to the present day.

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## ART. II. — LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS.

IN a former article in this journal,\* when discussing the question whether the study of language is a physical science, we were led to inquire at some length what is the force which makes and preserves language, which determines its form and brings about its changes. Our conclusion was, that this force is simply the will of men, acting in individuals and in communities, governed in its workings by all the various influences which are wont to guide human action ; — influences external, consisting in the circumstances by which men are surrounded,

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\* See No. CCIX., October, 1865, Vol. CI. p. 434 seq.

the historical exigencies in which they are placed, the necessities of their communication ; influences internal, consisting in the wants and aspirations, the native endowments, the unconscious tendencies, the habits, the idiosyncrasies, the whims even, of those who speak. Language, in either its material substance or its formal structure can only be reached and affected through the minds of those who employ it for the purposes of their expression. Every modifying cause of any other kind has to be transmuted into a mental one, — into a motive, an inclination, a capacity, an insight, before it can act on speech, and work itself out in linguistic change. Upon a recognition of this truth must be founded the true understanding and interpretation of all the phenomena of linguistic life, — the events, as they are more literally to be styled, of linguistic history. To leave out of account, or to put into a subordinate place, the element of free human action, and to refer those events directly to influences which have nothing to do with them otherwise than mediately, or to ascribe them to energies inherent in speech itself, is an error so serious that it gives a false aspect to the whole study of language. Linguistic science, not less than some of the physical sciences, has had its triple course of development, as formulated in the philosophy of Comte, and each of the three stages is more or less distinctly recognizable in the views of some of its present votaries. The “theological” stage is represented by the once prevailing opinion that language is a divine creation, elaborated in all its parts by the Deity, and miraculously placed in men’s possession ; parallel with which, moreover, though so unlike it in many aspects, is the doctrine, seriously put forward by some physical scientists, that speech is a direct product of the physical constitution of its speakers, a kind of secretion of organs provided for that purpose, and that its varieties represent differences of animal organization. Both these alike cut off all possibility of a real science of language. The “metaphysical” stage is seen in a personification of language itself as an independent existence, an organism, and of its laws and processes as actual powers, literally working themselves out, governing the material in which they are exhibited, and producing effects after the manner of gravity, cohesion, chemical affinity, and the other

forces which are active in the changes of matter. The final or "positive" stage is entered upon when linguistic scholars are minded to keep themselves strictly upon the basis of observed fact and legitimate induction, to avoid the acceptance of figures as realities, to see clearly and describe definitely, and not to cover up ignorance and obscurity of thought with sounding and philosophical phraseology. A true scientific method, as was before attempted to be shown, brings us to look upon language as an institution, and the race that speaks each tongue as its maker and modifier, as well as preserver and perpetuator. A process of linguistic growth is nothing more than the collective effect, in a given direction, of the acts of a number of separate individuals, guided by the preferences and controlled by the assent of the community whereof they form a part. In order now to bring the truth of the principles formerly laid down, and established chiefly by appeal to general principles and facts within the immediate cognizance of every one, to the further test of the historical facts of language as they exhibit themselves upon a grander scale, we propose to discuss here the phenomena of dialects, their rise and their overthrow,—the diversification and assimilation of languages.

The almost infinite variety of human tongues is one of the most obvious facts connected with our possession and exercise of the gift of speech. Whether the human race be one species or more, their dialects are as numerous and as unlike one another, almost, as the species of the whole animal kingdom. The earth is full of discordant languages,—discordant in the sense that he who has acquired one is unable to understand and use the others; dialectic diversity seems to be the inseparable condition of linguistic life. Yet this diversity has its degrees: as there are local differences of phrase and construction in the speech of those who yet must be accounted as on the whole speaking the same tongue, so there are gradations of ever-increasing difference and ever-decreasing correspondence, until we find idioms so unlike that the most careful search fails to bring to light any traits, of material or structure, in which they agree. Where there are traceable resemblances, we are accustomed to regard them as signs of common descent; the tongues in which they are found, we say, are related with one another;

they are later divergent forms of a single original. In what sense, now, is this to be understood? and what are the forces which cause one language to divide, with the lapse of time, into many, while another preserves its homogeneousness within, or beyond, its ancient bounds? The explanation is not hard to find: it lies wholly in the respective action upon language of the individual and of the community.

All language, as we have seen, is in a state of constant flux and change, never maintaining continuously its limits of vocabulary, its phonetic form, its grammar, or the meaning of its words. The necessity and convenience of its speakers evoke the change; as their means of expression and communication, it must reflect what they have in their minds, and represent their changing knowledge, thoughts, and manners. Now the infinite diversity of character and of circumstances in the individuals who have language under their control tends to infinite diversity in their action and its products. There is no inner power, no organic growth, in speech, which determines its manifestations, subjecting or constraining the action of men upon it; it is and becomes just what they choose to make it. But many men, many minds; and each independent mind, working unrestrainedly according to its own impulses, would impress upon the development of speech a somewhat different history. No two men speak precisely the same tongue; of course, then, they would not propagate the same. Each has his own limited vocabulary, and, within that, his peculiar usages; he has his own pet words and phrases, his deviations from the normal standard of pronunciation, of construction, of grammar; he attaches to many words a meaning tinged with the hue of his individual character; his needs are in some degree unlike those of others; his mind is somewhat differently impressed and guided by feelings and experiences, differently swayed by the weight of existing analogies. Such tendency to variation, of course, exerts its influence within comparatively narrow bounds; individual speakers of English would not, if left to their own devices, rush madly off toward a Choctaw or a Kamchatkan model of speech: yet its effects are by no means insignificant. It is like the variation of the separate individuals of a species of plants or animals in respect to traits of structure and disposition, which,

however slow its progress, would finally, if encouraged to accumulate its effects, break up the species into well-marked varieties. But the change of language is almost infinitely more rapid and thorough than any that takes place in the animal creation ; under favoring circumstances, it takes but a few generations to make out of a given tongue one so different that the speakers of the earlier and of the later would be wholly unable to understand one another : and, since every item of this change is finally traceable to individual action, the magnitude of the effect produced is a true measure of the intensity of the individual varying causes.

Linguistic development is thus made up, as we may fairly express it, of an infinity of divergent or centrifugal forces. But there is not wanting also an effective centripetal force, which holds all the others in check, which combines and resolves them all, giving value to that part of each which makes in a certain direction, and annulling the rest. This centripetal force is the necessity of communication. Man is no soliloquist : he does not talk for his own diversion and edification, but for converse with his fellows ; and only that can be language, in the use of which there is mutual intelligence between speaker and hearer. What one individual alone should understand might be something very ingenious, and valuable for his private ends, but it would have no title to be called language. Every person is engaged, in his own way and measure, in modifying his native tongue, by corruptions of utterance, by peculiarities of phrase, by impressing old words with the stamp of his own private apprehension,—even by additions now and then to the vocabulary ; but no one's action affects the general speech, unless it be accepted by others, and ratified in their use. What remains individual perishes, and is heard of no more ; what becomes the property of all keeps alive, and is handed down from generation to generation. There is no other power to restrain me from making the most fantastic and arbitrary alterations in the words I use, or from introducing what seem to me and my next friends the most obvious and desirable improvements in our common speech, save only my knowledge that it is futile to attempt what the non-concurrence of the community will frustrate. I can change my speech just so far as I can persuade those about me to

follow my example, and no further. If they who form one community together do not talk alike, and cannot understand one another, the fundamental and essential office of speech is not fulfilled. Hence, whatever changes a language may undergo, they must all be shared in by the whole body to which it belongs. The idiosyncrasies, the sharp angles and jutting corners, of each single person's idiom, must be worn down by attrition against those with which it comes in contact in the ordinary intercourse of life, that a rounded unit, a common tongue, may be the product.

This unification of the language of a community does not imply an absolute identity of dialect among its members, down to the smallest details. Within certain limits — which, though not strictly definable, are sufficiently distinct and coercive to answer their purpose perfectly well — every one may be as original as he pleases. He may push his oddity and obscurity to the very verge of the whimsical and the incomprehensible; or even beyond it, if he do not mind being misunderstood and laughed at, — if his sense of his own individuality be so exaggerated that he is a whole community, a world, to himself. The word *community*, moreover, as used with reference to language, must not be taken in a too restricted or definite sense. It has various degrees of extension, and bounds within bounds. The same person may belong to more than one community, using in each a somewhat different idiom. For instance: I have, as we may suppose, a kind of home dialect, containing a certain proportion of baby-talk, and a larger of familiar modes of speech, of favorite colloquialisms, which I should be shy of using with any one outside of my family circle. Again, as an artisan, pursuing a special branch of manufacture or trade, or as one engaged in a particular profession, or study, or department of art, I am a member of another community, speaking a language to some extent peculiar, and which would be understood neither by my wife and children, nor by the majority of speakers of English. Thus, I may have dived deep into the mysteries of some scheme of transcendental philosophy, or searched and pondered the ultimate physical constitution of atoms; and if I should discourse before a general audience touching that which to me is full of profoundest significance,

while one out of twenty, perhaps, would follow me with admiring appreciation, to the other nineteen I should seem an incomprehensible ranter. But even as a general speaker of English, qualified to meet and converse intelligently with others who claim the same title, upon matters of import to us all, I may have my speech marked more or less strongly with local and personal peculiarities; it may exhibit unusual tones of utterance, or unusual turns of phrase, which, if I would be readily and thoroughly understood, I must endeavor to avoid. Now all these differences, limited as their range may be, are in their essential nature dialectic; the distinction between such idioms, as we may properly call them, and well-marked dialects, or related but independent languages, is one of degree only, not of kind. For I also possess a considerable portion of my speech in common with the Netherlander, the German, and the Swede, to say nothing of my remoter relations, the Russian, the Persian, and the Hindu; and if, in talking with any one of them, I could only manage to leave out of my conversation such words as belong to my dialect alone, and, moreover, not to pronounce the rest with such a local peculiarity of tone, nor give them such idiomatic shades of meaning, he and I might get along together famously, each of us understanding all the other said. I can, indeed, make calculations and compose mathematical formulas with him all day long; if we are chemists, we can compare our views as to the constitution of all substances, organic and inorganic, to our mutual edification; if musicians, we can convey intelligibly to one another our highest inspirations, our deepest thoughts; since, as regards their mathematical, chemical, and musical language, their systems of notation and nomenclature, all who share European civilization form together but a single community.

There is no lack of room, then, for all that diversity which was shown in our former article to belong to the speech of different individuals and different classes in the same community, along with that general correspondence which makes them speakers of one language and members of one community. The influence of community works in various degrees and within various limits, according to the nature and extent of the tie through which it is exercised. The whim of a child and the assent of



its parents may make a change in the family idiom ; the consent of all the artisans in a certain branch of mechanical labor is enough to give a new term the right to stand in their technical vocabulary ; the collective voice of good writers and speakers of English is the only authority which can make a word good English in the part of our tongue that we all alike use and value ; while all cultivated Europe must join together, in order to alter the notation of a tone or a number, or the symbol of a chemical element. But the principle is everywhere the same : as mutual intelligibility is the bond which makes the unity of a language, so the necessity of mutual intelligibility is the power which preserves and perpetuates that unity.

After this exposition, it cannot be difficult to see what are the influences which govern the growth of dialects, producing or effacing them, favoring or retarding their development. If communication is the assimilating force which averages and harmonizes the effect of discordant individual action on language, keeping it, notwithstanding its incessant changes, the same to all the members of the same community, then it is clear that everything which narrows communication and tends to the breaking up of communities promotes the separation of their single tongue into discordant tongues ; while all that extends communication and strengthens the ties which bind together the parts of a community tends to preserve the homogeneity of speech. Suppose a race, occupying a certain tract of country, to possess one common idiom, which all understand and use alike : then, so long as the race is confined within narrow limits, however rapidly that idiom may yield to the effect of the irresistible forces which produce linguistic growth, all will learn from each, and each from all ; and, from generation to generation, every man will understand his neighbor, whatever difficulty he might find in conversing with the spirit of his great-grandfather, or of some yet remoter ancestor. But if the race grows in numbers, spreading itself over region after region, sending out colonies to distant lands, its uniformity of speech is exposed to serious danger, and can only be saved by specially favoring circumstances and conditions. And these conditions, while in part identical with those which determine the rate and mode of linguistic change in general, are, nevertheless, much

more exclusively of an external nature ; they derive their origin neither from the peculiarities of individual nor of national character ; they are historical, social, political ; they depend in no small measure on the kind and degree of culture enjoyed, and the influences which this naturally exerts. In a low state of civilization, the maintenance of community over a wide extent of country is altogether impracticable ; the tendency to segregation is the most powerful ; local and clannish feelings prevail, stifling the growth of any wider and nobler sense of national unity and common interests ; each little tribe or section is jealous of and dreads the rest ; the struggle for existence arrays them in hostility against each other ; or, at the best, the means of constant and thorough communication among the individuals inhabiting different parts of the country is wanting, along with the feelings which should impel to it. Thus all the diversifying tendencies are left to run their course unchecked ; varieties of circumstance and experience, the subtler and more indirect influences of climate and mode of life, the yet more undefinable agencies which have their root in individual and national caprice, gradually accumulate their discordant effects about separate centres, and local varieties of speech arise, which grow into dialects, and these into distinct, and, finally, widely dissimilar languages. The rate at which this differentiation will go on depends, of course, in no small degree, upon the general rate of change of the common speech ; as the dialects can only become different by growing apart, a sluggishness of growth will keep them longer together, — and that, not by its direct operation alone, but also by giving the weak forces of an imperfect and scanty communication an opportunity to work in counteraction of the others. Now it has been shown that linguistic change, so far as it concerns the grammatical structure and phonetic form of language, is chiefly a result of defective tradition ; by carelessness in the acquisition of words, or by inaccuracy in their reproduction, men alter, from generation to generation, the idiom which they transmit. It is evident, then, that everything which assists the accuracy of linguistic tradition tends to preserve language unchanged. Where speech is most unconsciously employed, with most exclusive attention to the needs and conveniences of the moment, with least regard to

its inherited usages, there its changes are rifest. Any introduction of the element of reflection is conservative in its effect. A people that think of their speech, talk about it, observe and deduce its rules and usages, will alter it but slowly. A tendency to do this sometimes forms a part of a nation's peculiar character, being the result of qualities, habits, and associations which it is wellnigh or quite impossible to trace out and explain ; but often it is called out, or promoted and strengthened, by very obvious conditions, — by admiring imitation of the ways and words of them of old time ; by the possession of a traditional literature ; but most of all by a recorded literature, the habit of writing, and a system of instruction. Of all the forces which oppose linguistic change, culture and education are the most powerful. The smallest possible alterative influence will emanate from one who has been trained to speak correctly by a conscious effort, and who is accustomed to write what he says almost as frequently and naturally as he speaks it. Words in their true form and independent entity are too distinctly present to his mind for him to take part either in their fusion or mutilation. Hence the effect of literary culture is to fix a language in the condition in which it happens to be found, to assure to it the continued possession of the formative processes which are then active in its development, but to check or prevent its acquisition of any others ; to turn its prevailing habits into unalterable laws, and to maintain its phonetic character against anything but the most gradual and insidious change. Under such influences, as we know, have come into being the many classical and sacred dialects which the world's history has shown, subsisting alongside of popular idioms, deviating more and more widely from the latter, and usually in the end overthrown and supplanted by them, — such as the ancient Egyptian, the Zend, the Sanskrit, the Latin. The culture which sustained them has been limited to a class, who have become by degrees their exclusive possessors, while the speech of the masses has run its course of growth unchecked : make this culture universal, and you will have fixed the speech of all.

All those cultural forces, then, which restrict the variation of a language from generation to generation, are, as such, equally effective in checking its variation from portion to portion of a

people. And they also contribute to the same result in another way, by directly strengthening and extending the bonds of community. Civilization and enlightenment give a wonderful cohesive force ; they alone render possible a wide political unity, maintenance of the same institutions, government under the same laws ; they facilitate the common possession of memories and traditions, and foster national feeling ; they create the tastes and needs which lead the people of different regions to mix with and aid one another ; and they furnish the means of ready and frequent intercourse, — all of which makes not less powerfully for linguistic than for social unity.

But, further, that same necessity of mutual comprehension which occasions and preserves the identity of language throughout a community has power also to bring forth identity out of diversity. No natural and indissoluble tie binds any human being to his own personal and local peculiarities of idiom, or even to his mother-tongue ; they are made his only by habit and convenience ; he is ever ready to give them up for others, when circumstances make it worth his while to do so. The once broad-mouthed rustic, whom the force of inborn character and talent advances to a position among cultivated men, wears off the rudeness of his native dialect, and learns to speak, perhaps, not less correctly and elegantly than those who have been trained from birth after the best models. Those who come up from among the dialects of every part of Britain to seek their fortune in the metropolis acquire some one of the styles of English speech which flourish there ; and, even if they are unable ever to rid themselves wholly of provincialisms, there is nothing to hinder their children, at least, from growing up as thorough cockneys as if their families had never lived out of sound of Bow bells. Any one of us who migrates to a foreign land and settles there, identifying himself with a community of strange speech, learns to talk with them, as well as his previously formed habits will let him ; and between his descendants and theirs there will be no difference of speech, however unlike they may be in hue and feature. If adventurers of various race and tongue combine themselves together to form a colony, and take up their abode in some new country, their speech at once begins to undergo a process of assimilation, which sooner or later makes it

one and homogeneous. How rapidly this end shall be attained, and whether some one element shall absorb the rest, or all shall contribute equally to the resulting dialect, must be determined by the special circumstances of the case. Of the multitudes of Germans whom emigration brings to our shores, some settle down together in considerable numbers: they cover with their colonies a tract in the West, or fill a quarter in some of our large towns and cities. They form, then, a kind of community of their own, inside the greater community in the midst of which they are placed, having numerous points of contact with the latter, but not absorbed into its structure; there are enough speakers of English among them to furnish all the means of communication with the world about which they absolutely need; they are proud of their German nationality, and cling to it; they have their own schools, papers, books, preachers; and their language, though sure to yield finally to the assimilating influences which surround it, may be kept in existence and use, possibly, for generations. So also with a crowd of Irish, clustered together in a village or suburb, breeding in and in, deriving their scanty instruction from special schools under priestly care: their characteristic brogue and other peculiarities of word and phrase may have an indefinite lease of life. But, on the other hand, families of foreign nationality scattered in less numbers among us can make no effective resistance to the force which tends to identify them thoroughly with the community of English speakers, and their language is soon given up for ours.

There is evidently no limit to the scale upon which such fusion and assimilation of speech may go on in human communities. The same causes which lead an individual, or family, or group of families, to learn and use another tongue than that which they themselves or their fathers have been accustomed to speak, may be by historical circumstances made operative throughout a whole class, or over a whole region. When two communities are combined into one, there comes to be but one language, where before there may have been two. A multiplication and strengthening of the ties which bind together the different sections of one people, the introduction or wider diffusion of culture, the establishment of a uniform system of education

— all these influences, and all others of the same kind, make directly for the effacement of already existing varieties of dialect, and the production of homogeneous language.

Such effacement and assimilation of dialectic varieties, not less than differentiation and formation of new dialects, are all the time going on among human communities, according as circumstances favor the one or the other class of effects; and a due consideration of both is necessary, if we would comprehend the history of any tongue, or family of tongues. Let us look at one or two examples, which shall serve to illustrate their joint and mutual workings, and to set forth more clearly the truth of the principles we have laid down.

We will consider first the history of that one among the prominent literary languages of the present day which has most recently attained its position, namely the German. From the earliest dawn of history, Germany has been filled with a multitude of more or less discordant dialects, each occupying its own limited territory, and no one of them better entitled than any other to set itself up as the norm of correct German speech. How far back their separation goes, it is impossible to tell: whence, when, and how the first Germanic tribe entered Central Europe, that its tongue might become there the mother of so many languages, crowding Germany and Scandinavia, and spreading, through England, even to the shores and prairies of a new world; or whether the beginnings of dialectic division were made before the entrance of the race into its present seats, — these are secrets which will never be fully disclosed. There were sweeping changes in the range and character of the Germanic dialects during those ages of migration and strife when Germany and Rome were carrying on their life-and-death struggle. Whole branches of the German race, among them some of the most renowned and mighty, as the Goths and Vandals, wholly lost their existence as separate communities, being scattered and absorbed into other communities; and their languages also ceased to exist. Leagues and migrations, intestine struggles and foreign conquests, produced fusions and absorptions, extensions, contractions, and extinctions, in manifold variety, but without any tendency to a general unity; and three centuries and a half ago, when the modern German first

put forth its claim to stand as the common language of Germany, there was in that country the same Babel of discordant speech as at the Christian era. Since the introduction of Christianity and the beginnings of civilization, more than one of the High-German dialects, as they are called, the dialects of Central and Southern Germany, had been for a season the subject of literary culture. This was the case with the idioms, in succession, of the Allemanic, Frankish, and Bavarian divisions of the race, between the seventh and the thirteenth centuries; then, for a time, the Swabian dialect gained the pre-eminence, and in it was produced a rich and noble legendary literature, containing precious memorials of national heroic story, still studied and valued wherever the German tongue is spoken. Here was a promising beginning for a truly national language, but the conditions of the times were not yet such as to give the movement lasting and assured success. Three centuries later began the grand national upheaval of the Reformation. The writings of Luther, multiplied and armed with a hundred-fold force by the new art of printing, penetrated to all parts of the land, and to nearly all ranks and classes of the people, awakening everywhere a vivid enthusiasm. The language he used was not the local dialect of a district, but one which had already a better claim than any other to the character of a general German language: it was the court and official speech of the principal kingdoms of Central and Southern Germany, made up of Swabian, Austrian, and other dialectic elements. To a language so accredited, the internal impulse of the religious excitement and the political revolutions accompanying it, and the external influence of the press, which brought its literature, and especially Luther's translation of the Bible, into every reading family, were enough to give a common currency, a general value. It was set before the eyes of the whole nation as the most cultivated form of German speech; it was acknowledged and accepted as the dialect of highest rank, the only fitting organ of communication among the educated and refined. From that time to the present, its influence and power have gone on increasing. It is the vehicle of literature and instruction everywhere. Whatever may be the speech of the lower classes in any section, the educated, those who make up good society,

speaking the literary German ; their children are trained in it ; nothing else is written. The popular dialects are still as numerous as ever, because education is not pervading and thorough enough to extirpate them ; and their existence may be prolonged for an indefinite period : but the literary language exercises a powerfully repressing and assimilating effect upon them all ; it has lessened their rank and lowered their character, by withdrawing from them in great measure the countenance and aid of the cultivated ; it has leavened them all with its material and its usages ; and it may finally succeed in crowding them altogether out of use. Its sway extends just as far as the external influences which established it reach : it is not confined to the territory occupied by the High-German dialects, its nearest kindred ; the people of the northern provinces also, speaking tongues of Low-German descent, which are much more nearly related with the Netherlandish, or even with the English, are drawn by the ties of political, social, and religious community with the rest of Germany to accept and use it. While, on the other hand, political independence, aided by diversity of social and religious usages, has given a separate existence as a literary language to the Dutch or Netherlandish, and yet more notably to the English, descendants of dialects originally undistinguished among the crowd of Low-German idioms which lined the shores of the North Sea.

The history of most other literary languages is of the same character with that which we have just been examining. Each was, at the outset, one out of a number of kindred but more or less diverse forms of speech, and the predominance which it came to gain over them was the result, not of its inherent merits as an instrument of thought and means of communication, but of outward circumstances, which made its usages worth the acquisition of a wider and wider community. Thus the parent language of the modern French was the vernacular speech of only a small part of the population of France, and it long had a rival, and almost a superior, in the early and highly cultivated dialect of Southern France, the Provençal, or *langue d'oc* ; nor, if the kingdom of Toulouse had maintained itself, would the latter ever have yielded to the former. But the sceptre of political supremacy over all France passed



into the keeping of the northern provinces, and their speech became the rule of good usage throughout the land, while the *langue d'oc* lost by degrees its character as a cultivated dialect, and survives only in rude and insignificant provincial *patois*. The Italian was, in like manner, the popular idiom only of Tuscany, one of the innumerable local dialects which crowd and jostle one another between the Alps and Sicily, and its currency among the educated classes of the whole peninsula is the effect of literary influence and of instruction.

An illustration of a somewhat different character is afforded us by the history of the Latin,—a history in many respects more remarkable than that of any other language which has ever existed. This conquering tongue, whose descendants now occupy so large and fair a part of Europe, and, along with their half-sister, the English, fill nearly all the New World, and numerous scattered tracts, coasts, and islands on every continent and in every ocean, while its material has leavened and enriched the speech of all enlightened nations, was the vernacular idiom, not twenty-five centuries ago, of a little isolated district in Middle Italy, — a region which, on any map of the world not drawn upon a scale truly gigantic, one might easily cover with the end of a finger. How and when it came there we know not; but it was one of a group of related dialects, descendants and joint representatives of an older tongue, spoken by the first immigrants, which had grown apart by the effect of the usual dissimilating processes. Remains of at least two of these sister dialects, the Oscan and the Umbrian, are still left in existence, to exercise the ingenuity of the learned, and to illustrate the ante-historic period of Italic speech. The Latin was pressed on the north by the Etruscan, and threatened from the south by the Greek, — languages of much more powerful races, and the latter of them possessing a higher intrinsic character and an infinitely superior cultivation: no one could then have dared to guess that its after career would be so much more conspicuous than theirs. Its spread began with the extension of Roman dominion, and was the plainest and most unequivocal sign of the thorough and penetrating nature of that dominion. Not content with the loose and nominal sway which the Persian sovereign exercised over the heterogeneous parts of his vast

empire, or the yet laxer authority of the more modern Mongol rulers over their wide conquests, the Romans infused, as it were, a new organic life into the vast body corporate of which they were the head, and made their influence felt through its every nerve and fibre. Italy they first subjected and Romanized. The yoke they imposed and riveted by their military colonies, their laws and institutions, their culture, and their all-penetrating administration, was a bond of community against which no other proved able to maintain itself. All the languages of the peninsula, from the Gaulish of the north to the Greek of the extreme south, gave way by degrees before the tongue of the conquering city, and Italy became a country of one uniform speech. And yet not wholly uniform. Relics of the ancient languages maintained themselves for a long time in certain more inaccessible districts, and their influence was doubtless to be distinctly seen in the varying local dialects of the different parts of the peninsula; as, indeed, traces of it are even now discoverable there. The common speech of Italy, too, setting aside these dialectic distinctions, was not the pure, polished Latin of Cicero and Virgil, but a ruder idiom, containing already the germs of many of the changes exhibited by the modern Italian and the other Romanic tongues. The same process of conquest and incorporation into the Roman community was carried further, upon a grand and surprising scale, into the other countries of Europe. The Celts of Gaul, the Celts and Iberians of Spain, gave up their own languages, and adopted that of their rulers and civilizers, not less completely than have the Celts of Ireland, within the last few centuries, exchanged their Irish speech for English. Of Celtic words and usages only scanty and unimportant traces are to be found in the modern French and Spanish. The same fate threatened Germany, had not her brave and hardy tribes offered too stubborn a resistance to the already waning forces of the Empire; and Britain also, had not its remote situation and inferior value as a province caused the Roman hold upon it to be weak, and soon abandoned. Less considerable tracts of Southeastern Europe, stretching from the northern border of Italy to near the mouth of the Danube, yielded to the same influence: subdued by the arms, colonized from the population, organized by the policy,

civilized by the culture of the great city, they learned also to talk her language, forgetting their own. Thus arose the great and important group of the Romanic languages, as they are called ; namely, the Italian, the French, the Spanish and Portuguese, the Rhæto-Romanic of Southern Switzerland, and the Wallachian ; each including a host of varying dialects, all lineal descendants of the Latin, all spoken by populations only in small part of Latin race.

We must not suppose, however, that a pure and classical Latin was ever the popular dialect of this wide-extended region of Europe, any more than of Italy after its first Romanization. The same counteracting causes, acting on a grander scale and with an intensified force, prevented correctness and homogeneity of speech. The populace got their Latin rather from the army and its followers, the colonists and low officials, than from educated Romans and the works of great authors. Doubtless there was not at first such a difference between the dialect of the highest and of the lowest that they could not understand one another ; but, whatever it was, it rapidly became wider. While study and the imitation of unchanging models kept the scholars and ecclesiastics in possession of the classical Latin, only a little barbarized by the irresistible intrusion into it of words and constructions borrowed from vernacular use, the language of the masses grew rapidly away from it, breaking up at the same time into those innumerable local forms to whose existence we have already referred. There was no conserving and assimilating influence at work among the millions who had taken for their own the language of Rome, capable either of binding them fast to its established usages, or of keeping their lines of linguistic growth parallel. Special disturbing forces came in here and there. Incursions and conquests of German tribes brought an element of Germanic speech into the tongues alike of Spain, France, and Italy. Centuries of Saracen domination engrafted upon the Spanish language a notable store of words of Arabic derivation. When at length the dark ages of European history were over, and knowledge and culture were to be taken out of the exclusive custody of the few, and made the wealth and blessing of the many, the Latin was a dead language, much too far removed from popular wants and sympa-

thies to be able to serve the needs of the new nations. Hence the rise in each separate country, at not far from the same time, of a new national tongue, to be the instrument and expression of the national culture. All Romanized Europe was in the condition already described as that of Germany prior to the advancement of the modern German to its present position. A chaos of varying dialects was there; and in every case external historical circumstances determined which of them should attain a higher value, and should subject and absorb the rest.

In all this alternate and repeated divergence and convergence of dialects, there is evidently nothing which should be looked upon as mysterious, or even puzzling. Such has been the history of language from the beginning, and in all parts of the earth. We need only the tendency of individual language to vary, and the effect of community to check, limit, and even reverse this tendency, in order to explain every case that arises. The peculiar conditions of each case must decide whether their joint action shall, on the whole, make for homogeneity or for diversity of speech; and the result, in kind and in degree, will vary according to the sum of the causes which produced it: as the resultant motion, in rate and direction, combines and represents all the forces, however various and conflicting, of whose united action it is the effect.

Thus, as has been already pointed out, when there takes place a fusion of two communities, larger or smaller, of varying speech, no general law can determine what shall be the resulting dialect. When the Romans conquered Gaul, although forming only a minority of the population, they almost totally obliterated the Gaulish speech, putting the Latin in its place; for they brought with them culture and polity, art and science, learning and letters; they made it better worth while for the Celts to learn Latin than to adhere to their own ancient idiom. When, however, the Germanic Franks, a few centuries later, conquered in their turn the now Latinized Gaul, and turned it into a kingdom of France, they adopted the language of their more numerous and more cultivated subjects, only adding a small percentage of Germanic words to its vocabulary, and perhaps contributing an appreciable influence toward hastening the decay, already well in progress, of the Latin grammatical system.

The same thing happened once more, when the Scandinavian Northmen, representing another branch of the Germanic family, after extorting from the beaten and trembling monarchs of France the cession of one of her fairest provinces, became the not less formidable and dreaded Normans. Although placed in seemingly favorable circumstances for conserving their linguistic independence, crowded together as they were within comparatively narrow bounds, and making on their own ground, of which they were absolute masters, the majority of the population, they yet could not resist the powerful assimilating influences which pressed them — a horde of uncouth and unlearned barbarians — on every side. Within a wonderfully short time, their Norse tongue had altogether gone out of use, leaving traces only in a few geographical names: along with French manners, French learning, and French polity, they had implicitly adopted also French speech. Hardly was this conversion accomplished, when they set forth to propagate their new linguistic faith in a country occupied by dialects akin with that which they had recently forsworn. The Angles and Saxons, Germanic tribes, had meantime finished the task, only begun by the Romans, of extirpating upon the largest and best part of British ground the old Celtic speech. They had done it in a somewhat different way, by sheer brute force, by destroying, enslaving, or driving out the native population, and filling all but the most inaccessible regions of the island with their own ferocious tribesmen. Hence the wholly insignificant remains of Celtic material to be found among the ordinary stores of expression of our English tongue. Christianity and civilization found the invaders in their new home; and an Anglo-Saxon literature grew up, which, had circumstances continued favorable, might have aided national unity of government, institutions, and culture to assimilate the varying dialects of the country, producing a national language not inferior in wealth and polish to our present speech. But they who take the sword shall perish by the sword; upon the Anglo-Saxons were wreaked the woes they had themselves earlier brought upon the Celts. Danish and Norse invasions, during a long period, bitterly vexed and weakened the Saxon state, and it finally sank irrecoverably under the Norman conquest. This time, the collision of

two diverse languages, upborne by a nearly equal civilization, — the partial superiority of that of the Normans being more than counterbalanced by their inferiority in numbers, — under the government of political circumstances, produced a result different from any which we have thus far had occasion to notice ; namely, a truly composite language, drawing its material and its strength in so nearly equal part from the two sources that scholars are able to dispute whether the modern English is more Saxon or more French. Into the details of the combination we cannot now stay to enter, but must pass on to note the later dialectic history of the language ; merely directing attention to the important and familiarly known fact that its formative apparatus, — whether consisting in inflections, affixes of derivation, or connectives and relational words, — along with the most common and indispensable part of its vocabulary, remained almost purely Saxon, so that it is to be accounted still a Germanic dialect in structure, although furnished with stores of expression in no small part of Romanic origin.

The fusion of Saxon and Norman elements in English speech did not reach in equal measure all parts of the land or all classes of the people, nor did it by any means wipe out previously existing dialectic differences, thus furnishing a new and strictly homogeneous speech as a starting-point whence a new process of dialectic divergence should commence. On the contrary, Britain is still, like Germany, only in a less degree, a country full of dialects, some of whose peculiarities go back to the diversities of speech among the tribes by whom the Anglo-Saxon conquest of the island was achieved, thirteen hundred years ago, while the rest are of every date of origin, from that remote period to the present. One or two of these dialects — especially the Scottish and the Yorkshire — poetry and fiction have made somewhat familiarly known to us : others are matters of keen and curious interest to the student of language, their testimony being hardly less essential than that of the literary dialect to his comprehension of the history of English speech.

But it was impossible that, in the transfer of English to the continent of America, these local dialects should maintain themselves intact. That could only have been the result of a separate migration of parts of the local communities to which

they belonged, and of the continued maintenance of their distinct identity in their new place of settlement. Such was not the character of the movement which filled this country with an English-speaking population. Old lines of local division were effaced ; new ties of community were formed, embracing men of various province and rank. It was not more inevitable that the languages of the various nationalities which have contributed to our later population should disappear, swallowed up in the predominant English, than that the varying forms of English should disappear, being assimilated to that one among them which was better supported than the rest. Nor could it be doubtful which was the predominant element, to which the others would have to conform themselves. In any cultivated and lettered community, the cultivated speech, the language of letters, is the central point toward which all the rest gravitate, as they are broken up and lose their local hold. And our first settlers were in no small part from the instructed class, — men of high character, capacity, and culture. They brought with them a written language and a rich literature ; they read and wrote ; they established schools of every grade, and took care that each rising generation should not fall behind its predecessor in learning. The basis, too, of equality of rights and privileges, on which they founded their society, added a powerful influence in favor of equality of speech. As a natural and unavoidable consequence, then, of these determining conditions, and not by reason of any virtue for which we are to take credit to ourselves, the general language of America, through all sections of the country and all orders of the population, became far more nearly homogeneous, and accordant with the correct standard of English speech, than is the average language of England ; and the same influences which made it so have tended to keep it so. The democratic character of our institutions, and the almost universality of instruction among us, have done much to maintain throughout our community an approximate uniformity of idiom. There was, doubtless, never a country before, where, down to the very humblest classes of the people, so many learned to read and spell out of the same school-books, heard the same speakers from platform, desk, and pulpit, and read the same books and papers, — where there was

such a surging to and fro of the population, such a mixture and intimate intercourse of all ranks and of all regions. In short, every form of communication is more active and more far-reaching with us than ever elsewhere; every assimilating influence has had unequalled freedom and range of action. Hence, there was also never a case in which so nearly the same language was spoken throughout the whole mass of so vast a population as is the English now in America. Modern civilization, with the great states it creates, and the wide and active intercourse among men to which it prompts, and for which it affords the needed facilities, is able to establish upon unoccupied soil, and then to maintain there, community upon a scale of grandeur to which ancient times could afford no parallel.

Nor have we failed to keep nearly even pace with our British relations in the slow progressive development of the common tongue: our close connection with the mother country, the community of culture which we have kept up with her, our acknowledgment of her superior authority in matters of learning and literature, have been able thus far to restrain our respective lines of linguistic growth from notable divergence. Though we are sundered by an ocean, there have been invisible ties enough between us to bind us together into one community. Yet our concordance of speech is not perfect: British purism finds fault with even our higher styles of discourse, oral and written, as disfigured by Americanisms; and in both the tone and the material of colloquial talk the differences are, of course, much more marked. We have preserved some older words, phrases, and meanings, which their modern use discards; we have failed as yet to adopt certain others which have sprung up among them since the separation; we have originated yet others, which they have not accepted and ratified. Upon all these points we are, in the abstract, precisely as much in the right as they; but the practical question is, which of the two is the higher authority, — whose approved usage shall be the norm of correct English speaking. We have been content, hitherto, to accept the inferior position; but it is not likely that we shall always continue so. Our increasing numbers and our growing independence of character and culture will give us, in our own estimation, an equal right, at the least, and we shall feel more



and more unwilling to yield implicitly to British precedent ; so that the time may perhaps come when the English language in America and the English language in Britain will exhibit a noteworthy difference of material, form, and usage. What we have to rely upon to counteract this separating tendency, and annul its effect, is the predominating influence of the class of highest cultivation, as exerted especially through the medium of literature. Literature is the most dignified, the most legitimate, and the most powerful of the forces which effect the conservation of language, and the one which acts most purely according to its true merit, free from the adventitious aids or drawbacks of place and time. It is through her literature that America has begun, and must go on, to win her right to share in the elaboration of the English speech. Love and admiration of the same master-works in poetry, oratory, philosophy, and science have hitherto made one community of the two great divisions of speakers of English, and ought to continue to unite them ; and it will, we hope, do so : but more or less completely, according as that portion of the community which is most directly reached and effectively guided by literature is allowed authority over the rest.

We are, however, by no means free from dialects among our own population, although we may hope that they will long, or always, continue to be restricted within narrow limits of variation from the standard of correct speech, as they are at present. The New-Englander, the Westerner, the Southerner, even of the educated class, betrays his birth to a skilled observer by the peculiarities of his language ; and the lower we descend in the social scale, the more marked and prominent do these peculiarities become. There is hardly a locality in the land, of greater or less extent, which has not some local usages of phrase or utterance, characterizing those whose provincialism has not been rubbed off by instruction or by intercourse with a wider public. There is a certain degree of difference, too, of which we are all conscious, between the written and the colloquial style ; there are words and phrases in good conversational use, which would be called inelegant, and almost low, if met with in books ; there are words and phrases which we employ in composition, but which would seem forced and stilted if ap-

plied in the ordinary dealings of life. This is far from being a difference sufficient to mark the literary English as another dialect than that of the people : yet it is the beginning of such a difference ; it needs no change in kind, but only a change in degree, to make it accord with the distinction between any literary language which history offers to our knowledge and the less cultivated dialects which have grown up in popular usage by its side, and by which it has been finally overthrown and supplanted.

Nothing, then, as we see, can absolutely repress dialectic growth ; even the influences most powerfully conservative of identity of language, working in the most effective manner which human conditions have been found to admit, can only succeed in indefinitely reducing its rate of progress.

It will be noticed that we have used the terms “ dialect ” and “ language ” interchangeably, in speaking of any given tongue ; and it will also, we trust, have been clearly seen how vain would be the attempt to establish a definite and essential distinction between them, or to give precision to any of the other names which indicate the different degrees of diversity among related tongues. No form of speech, living or dead, of which we have any knowledge, was not or is not a dialect, in the sense of being the idiom of a limited community, among other communities of kindred but somewhat discordant idiom ; none is not truly a language, in the sense of being the means of mutual intercourse of a distinct portion of mankind, adapted to their capacity and supplying their needs. The whole history of spoken language, in all climes and all ages, is a series of varying and successive phases : external circumstances, often of an accidental character, give to some of these phases a prominence and importance, a currency and permanence, to which others do not attain ; and according to their degree of importance we style them idiom, or *patois*, or dialect, or language. To a very limited extent, natural history feels the same difficulty in establishing the distinction between a “ variety ” and a “ species ” ; and the difficulty would be not less pervading and insurmountable in natural than in linguistic science, if, as is the case in language, not only the species, but even the genera and higher groups of animals and plants were trace-

ably descended from one another, or from common ancestors, and passed into each other by almost insensible gradations. Transmutation of species in the kingdom of speech is no tempting hypothesis merely, but a patent fact, one of the fundamental and determining principles of linguistic study.

The process of transmutation of language goes on so rapidly, partly under our very eyes, partly within the reach of our direct historical research, that we cannot fail to follow intelligently its progress, and to distinguish its immediate producing forces from its remoter influencing causes, even if we cannot fully apprehend their mutual workings, or discover the links that connect them. That intricate combination of native capacities and dispositions, acquired and inherited habits, and guiding circumstances, of which, in each individual community, the form and development of the common speech is a product, is in no two communities the same, and everywhere calls for a special and detailed study in order to its comprehension, while it also has mysteries beyond our ken. Ethnologists are obliged, in the main, to take the differences of national character as ultimate facts, content to set them clearly forth, without attempting to explain them; and, to no small extent, a like necessity rests upon the linguist as regards linguistic differences: not only is he unable to account for the presence of peculiarities of character which determine peculiarities of speech, but even their analysis eludes his search; they manifest themselves only in these special effects, and are not otherwise demonstrable. But to overlook these causes, and put in their place such as are more distant and indirect; to ascribe the differences of language and linguistic growth immediately to physical forces, to differences of country, and climate, and food; or to make them dependent on subtile peculiarities of organization, whether cerebral, laryngeal, or other, — this is only a meaningless and futile device to cover up our ignorance. Language is not a physical product, but a human institution; it is preserved, perpetuated, and changed by free mental acts, not by the operation of structural forces. Education and habit, and nothing else, limit a man to the idiom in the possession of which he has grown up. Within any community of speakers of the same tongue may readily be found persons having endowments as unlike, in degree and kind,

as those which characterize the average men of distant and diverse races, speaking wholly discordant speech. Physical causes do, indeed, affect language, but only in two ways : first, as they change the circumstances to which men have to adapt their speech ; and secondly, as they alter men's nature and disposition, making them choose and act otherwise than they would else have done. Every physical cause requires to be transformed into a motive or a mental tendency, before it can affect the signs by which we represent our mental operations and conceptions. It is universally conceded that outward circumstances do produce a permanent effect upon the characteristics of race, internal as well as external, and so upon those, among the rest, which govern linguistic development ; but in what measure, at what rate, and through what details of change, is as yet matter of wide difference of opinion and lively controversy. There are over-hasty materialists who pronounce man the slave and sport of nature, controlled and moulded by the external forces amid which he exists, and who claim that his history may be explained and foretold by means of a knowledge of those forces, when as yet they have not read even the simplest rudiments of the modes in which human nature is shaped by its surroundings. These men have their counterparts also among students of language. But whatever may be hoped from the future, it is certain that at present nothing of value has been accomplished toward showing how linguistic growth is determined in its kind and rate by physical influences. There is no human dialect which might not maintain itself essentially unaltered in structure, though carried to climes very unlike those in which it had grown up, and though employed by a people whose culture and mode of life were rapidly varying. Emigration, often assumed to be the chief and most powerful cause of linguistic change, also often exercises a notably conservative influence upon language. And, on the other hand, a tongue may rapidly disintegrate, or undergo phonetic transformation, or vary the material of its vocabulary, without moving from the region of its origin, or becoming the organ of other conditions of human life than those to which it had been earlier adapted. Such facts as that the Icelandic is the most antique in form of all the dialects of the Germanic family, that the Lithuanian has preserved more of

the primitive apparatus of Indo-European inflection than any other known tongue of modern times, that the Armenian diverges most widely from the norm of Iranian speech, the Celtic from that of Indo-European, — these are matters which now baffle the efforts of the linguistic student at explanation, and probably will continue always to do so ; the forces which govern the rate and kind of linguistic change in different communities are in great part out of his reach, as they lie more buried in the depths of individual human nature, and are less controlled by outward circumstances, than those which determine the divergence and coalescence of dialects.

One or two recent writers upon language\* have committed the very serious error of inverting the mutual relations of dialectic variety and uniformity of speech, thus turning topsy-turvy the whole history of linguistic development. Unduly impressed by the career of modern cultivated dialects, their effacement of existing dialectic differences and production of uniform speech throughout wide regions, and failing to perceive the nature of the influences which alone make such a career possible, these authors affirm that the natural tendency of language is from diversity to uniformity ; that dialects are, in the regular order of things, antecedent to language ; that human speech began its history in a state of infinite dialectic division, which has been ever since undergoing coalescence and reduction. It may seem hardly worth while to spend any effort in refuting an opinion of which the falsity will have been made apparent by the exposition already given ; yet a brief additional discussion of the point will afford an opportunity of setting in a clearer light one or two important principles.

It will, doubtless, be readily admitted that the difference between any one given dialect and another of kindred stock is made up of a multitude of separate items of difference, and con-

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\* We refer particularly to M. Ernest Renan, whose peculiar views upon this subject are laid down in his *General History of the Semitic Languages*, and more fully in his treatise on the *Origin of Language* (2d edition, Paris, 1858, ch. viii.), — a work of great ingenuity and eloquence, but of which the philosophy is far more constructive than inductive. Professor Max Müller, too, when treating of the relations of the Teutonic languages (*Lectures on Language*, First Series, Fifth Lecture), appears distinctly to give in his adhesion to the same view.

sists in the sum and combined effect of these. Thus, for instance, words are possessed by the one which are wanting in the other ; words found in both are differently pronounced by each, or are used in senses either not quite identical or very unlike ; combinations and forms belong only to one, or are corrupted and worn down in different degree by the two respectively ; phrases occur in the one which would be incorrect or meaningless in the other. Now the gradual production of such differences as these is something which we see to have been going on in language during the whole period of its history illustrated by literary records ; nay, which is even going on at the present day under our own eyes. If the Italian uses in the sense of 'truth' the word *verità*, the Spanish *verdad*, the French *vérité*, the English *verity*, we know very well that it is not because all these forms were once indifferently current in the mouths of the same people, till those who preferred the one or the other of them sorted themselves out and came together into a separate community ; it must be, rather, because some single people formerly used in the same sense a single word, either coincident with one of these or nearly resembling them all, from which they have all descended in the ordinary course of linguistic tradition, that always implies liability to linguistic change. We happen to know, indeed, in this particular case, by direct historical evidence, what the original word was, and who were the people that used it : it was *veritas* (theme *vērītāt*), and belonged to the language of Rome, the Latin ; its present varieties of form merely illustrate the usual differentiating effects of phonetic corruption. So, too, if I say *attend*, and the Frenchman *attendez*, our words are unlike in pronunciation, in grammatical form (the latter having a distinctive plural ending which the former lacks), and in sense (the French meaning 'wait') ; and, in all respects save the last, both are equally unlike the Latin *attendite* : yet of this both are the lineal representatives ; no Roman ever said either *attend* or *attendez*. But the same reasoning we apply also in other cases, where direct historical evidence is wanting, arriving without hesitation or uncertainty at like conclusions. If we say *true*, while the German says *treu*, the Dane *tro*, the Netherlander *trouw*, and so on, we do not once think of doubting that it is because we have all gotten

nearly the same word, in nearly the same sense, by uninterrupted tradition from some primitive community in which a like word had a like sense ; and we set ourselves to discovering what this word was, and what and why have been the changes that have brought it into its present varying forms. The discordance between our *father*, the Anglo-Saxon *fæder*, the Icelandic *fadir*, the Dutch *vader*, and the German *vater*, does not, any more than that between *verity* and its analogues, compel us to assume a time when these words existed as primitive dialectic varieties in one community : we regard them as the later effects of the separation of one community into several. And when we compare them all with the Latin *pater*, the Greek *patēr*, the Persian *peder*, the Sanskrit *pitar*, — which are but palpable variations of the same original from which the rest have come, — our inference is still the same. Or, once more, our word *is* is the English correspondent of the German *ist*, the Latin *est*, the Greek *esti*, the Lithuanian *esti*, the Slavonian *yesti*, the Persian *est*, the Sanskrit *asti*. To the apprehension of the historical student of language, these eight are nothing more than slightly altered forms of a single vocable ; and their difference is one of the innumerable differences of detail which distinguish from one another the languages we have named. We cannot, to be sure, go back under the sure guidance of contemporary records to the people among whom, and the time at which, the word originated ; but we are just as far in this case, as in those referred to above, from being driven to the conclusion that all its known representatives are equally primitive, that they constitute together the state of indefinite dialectic variety in which the expression of the third person singular of the verb *to be* began, and that the nations, modern or ancient, in whose languages we find them, are the lineal descendants of those groups in a former community who finally made up their minds to prefer the one or the other of them. On the contrary, we derive, with all the confidence belonging to a strictly logical process of reasoning, the conclusion that the words we are considering are later alterations of a single original, and that they would have no existence if a certain inferable community, at an unknown period in the past, had not put together the verbal root *as*, signifying ‘existence,’ and the pronoun *ti*, meaning ‘he, it, that,’ to compose that original.

But our illustrations have already been drawn out at a length which may seem unnecessary and tedious, and we forbear to press them further. The same reasoning is obviously applicable to every other individual case of dialectic difference. It is futile to attempt to draw anywhere a dividing line in the historic development of language, and to say, these differences, on the one side, are the result of later linguistic growth; those, on the other side, are original, a part of the primitive dialectic division of human speech. The nature and uses of language, and the forces which act upon it and produce its changes, cannot but have been essentially the same during all the periods of its history, amid all its changing circumstances, in all its varying phases; and there is no way in which its unknown past can be investigated except by the careful study of its living present and its recorded past, and the extension and application to remote conditions of laws and principles deduced by that study. Like effects imply like causes, not less in the domain of language than in that of physical science; and he who pronounces the origin and character of ancient dialects and forms of speech to be fundamentally different from those of modern dialects and forms of speech, can only be compared with the geologist who should admit the formation by aqueous action of recent gravel and pebble beds, but should deny that water had anything to do with the production of ancient sandstones and conglomerates.

It should not, however, be overlooked, that, among those who hold the false doctrine of the priority of dialects, hardly any would refuse their assent to the comparisons and inferences which we have been detailing. They could not do so without cutting themselves off from the number of comparative philologists, for such comparison and inference constitute the main method of research in modern linguistic science. Only they fail to follow out the process to the conclusion to which it logically and necessarily conducts them; to note that, since the whole sum of dialectic discordance is made up of such individual bits of difference as these, if the latter point back in detail to an original unity, the former must in its entirety do the same. Let us hear the reasoning of one of them. "As there were families, clans, confederacies, and tribes," says Professor



Müller, "before there was a nation, so there were dialects before there was a language." The fallacy involved in this argument, as in all those which are used to support the view we are combating, is that it does not go back far enough; it begins in the midst of the historic development of human language, and tries to persuade itself and us that it is at the beginning. If clans and tribes were ultimate elements in the history of humanity, if the earth had brought forth her population, extruding each family and community in the place where our earliest researches discover it, then the indefinite diversity of human language in its earliest stage — a diversity, however, not dialectic, but fundamental — would follow as a direct historical consequence, and not an analogical inference merely. But if a population of scattered communities implies an earlier dispersion from a single point, if we must follow backward the fates of mankind until they centre in a limited number of families, or in a single pair, which expanded by natural increase, and scattered, forming those little groups and clans, which in some parts of the world have remained isolated from one another, and in others have fused together into great nations, — and who will deny that it is so? — then, also, both by analogy and by historical necessity, it follows that the true view of the relation between dialects and uniform speech is that to which we have been conducted above; namely, that the rise and separation of dialects can only accompany the division of a single community into disconnected parts, and that the assimilation of dialects is simply the concomitant and consequence of a coalescence of communities.

Prevalence of the same tongue over wide regions of the earth's surface was, indeed, impossible in the olden time, and human speech is now, upon the whole, tending toward a condition of less diversity with every century. But this is owing to the vastly increased efficiency at present of those external influences which counteract the inherent tendency of language to diversity. As, here in America, a single cultivated nation, of homogeneous speech, is taking the place of a congeries of wild tribes, with their host of discordant dialects, so, on a smaller scale, is it in many other parts of the world: civilization and the solidarity it makes are gaining ground upon barbarism and its isolating influences.

It is true, again, that a certain degree of dialectic variety is inseparable from the being of any language at any stage of its history. Even among ourselves, where, as we have seen, uniformity of speech prevails certainly not less than elsewhere, every individual speaks an idiom somewhat unlike his neighbor's, and each would hand down to his descendants a different tongue, if circumstances should make them both founders of independent linguistic traditions. However small, then, may have been the community which laid the foundation of any existing family of languages, we must admit the existence of some differences among the idioms of its individual members or families. And if we suppose such a community to be dispersed into the smallest possible fragments, and each fragment to become the progenitor of a separate community, it might be said, with a kind of truth, that the languages of these later communities began their history with dialectic differences already developed. The more widely extended, too, the original community before its dispersion, and the more marked the local differences, not inconsistent with mutual intelligibility, existing in its speech, so much the more capital, so to speak, would each portion have on which to begin its further accumulation of dialectic variations. But, on the one hand, these original dialectic differences would themselves be the result of previous growth; and, on the other hand, they would not be the causes of the later differences, — still less, identical with these. They would be of quite insignificant amount, as having been able to consist at the outset with linguistic unity; and we should be able to say, with entire truth, that the later dialects had grown by gradual divergence out of a single homogeneous language.

Once more, the value of such minor discordances of usage as may and do exist among those who are yet to be regarded as speaking the same tongue, is at its maximum in an uncultivated community. The first tendency of the cultivation, as we style it, of a language, is to wipe out this class of differences, extending the area and perfecting the degree of linguistic uniformity. And its work is accomplished — first as last, whether the scale of variation over which its influence bears sway be less or greater — by selection, not by fusion. These slightly differing

idioms of different individuals and localities are not mixed and averaged, or blended into one ; but the usages of one part of the community are set up as a norm, to which those of the rest shall be conformed, and from which further variation shall be checked or altogether prevented. An element of consciousness, of reflectiveness, is introduced into the use of language ; acknowledged imitation of certain models, deference to authority in matters of speaking, take the place of the former more spontaneous and careless employment of the common means of communication. The best speakers — those who use words with most precision, with most fulness and force of meaning, with most grace and art — become the teachers of the rest. This influence may be exerted in various ways, — by simple exercise of authority on the part of those who deserve to wield it, or with the aid of a popular literature handed down by tradition, or through the instrumentality of grammatical and lexical culture, of letters and learning, — but it is always essentially of the same nature. It is the guide and counsellor, not the master, of national usage. It undertakes no wholesale reform. Some write and speak as if the uncultivated employers of speech were impelled to launch out indefinitely into new words and forms, rioting in the profusion of their linguistic creations, until grammar comes to set bounds to their prodigality, and to reduce the common tongue within reasonable dimensions. But it is by no means so easy and seductive a thing to increase the resources of a language. We do not look to our dictionaries and grammars to know if we may venture to use elements which come crowding to our lips and demanding utterance. Linguistic growth is a slow process, extorted, as it were, by the exigencies of practical use, from the speakers of language. Economy is a main element in linguistic development ; that which is superfluous in a dialect falls off and dies of itself, without waiting to be lopped away by the pruning-knife of a grammarian. From among the varieties of equivalent form, utterance, and phrase which a defective communication has allowed to spring up within the limits of the same community, culture chooses those which shall be accepted as most worthy of preservation. It maintains what is good, warns against abuses, and corrects offences committed by a

part against the authority of general preference. A cultivated language is thus simply one whose natural growth has gone on for a time under the conscious and interested care of its best speakers ; which has been placed in their charge, for the maintenance of a standard, for the repression of disfiguring alterations, for enrichment with expressions for higher thought and deeper knowledge, — for the enforcement, in short, of their own studied usages of speech upon the less instructed and more heedless masses of a community.

These, then, are the important principles whose distinct recognition is essential to the successful prosecution of our inquiries into the history and relations of languages : — the unity and continuity of the course of linguistic development, through all its periods ; the essential identity of languages and dialects, of ancient and modern forms of speech ; the conservative, rather than revolutionary, influence of literary cultivation, and its power, as combined with culture, to check dialectic divergence and effect uniformity of language ; and the legitimate force of dialectic correspondences, wherever found, to prove original unity. With these clews to guide us, the labyrinth of human speech is no longer a labyrinth ; its mazes may be securely trodden. They guide us to the establishment of great families of related tongues, sprung from a common ancestor ; — first and most important among them, the Indo-European family, to which our own English belongs, filling Southern and Central Europe and Southwestern Asia, as far as the mouths of the Ganges, with its branches, all descendants and representatives of a single primitive idiom, once spoken by a limited community, in a contracted region of the earth's surface, — but where and when, we must be content to be ignorant.